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The Presence of Arabs in South India Before and After the Advent of Islam

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Introduction: invariably most of the scholars, who have dealt with the advent of Muslims in South India, have not differentiated in their writings about the presence of Arabs, Arab traders, Persians, Turks, Afghans, Iranians and others before and after the advent of Islam[1], as they are perhaps not familiar with the factors of culture, heritage and civilization of them. They have been obviously under the impression that people living in or coming from the Arabian Peninsula or even Middle East are commonly called or known as "Arabs." The general tendency of the writers is to disconnect all Arabs as a single entity or equating them Muslims and so on even without caring for the chronology. Even, in north India, the differentiation is made among the Arabs, Turks and Afghans[2]. It is well known fact that no Muslim could have come to India before the advent of Islam in Arabia (about 7th century) and spreads outside (about 8th century) and all the Arabs, coming from Arabia even after the advent and spread of Islam were not Muslims. Therefore, a critical study is made about the question of presence of Arabs, Arab traders, Arab Muslims and Muslims in South India. As the concept of "Arabia" and its history have to be understood, it is taken up first.

What is Arabia and who are Arabians?: In general, Countries and peoples were known to others with specific names, because of its popularity for some reason. The names and expressions with which they were known and understood would be prevalent. Thus, Indians particularly, who followed a specific religion, though, they did not call themselves "Hindus", but known as such by others. In the same way, the "Arabs" or the people coming from north-west of India were called by Indians with different names. This is very crucial to understand the entire question of the issue under study.

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[1] K. A. Nilakanta Sastri, ***Development od Religion in South India***, Orient Longman, Madras, 1983, p.70.
Very often statements like, "***With Islam*** *South India came into touch much earlier than the north: this was due to long established trade connections with* ***pre-Islamic Arabia****, which continued almost unaffected by the religious evolution in that country.* ***A Muslim fleet first saled in Indian waters in 637 A.D****, when a governor under Caliph Umar sent an army to Thana; but Umar disapproved of this.* ***Muslim traders, however, continued the contacts of pre-Muslimm days*****.....**....." (emphasis added).
Particularly, most of the Islamic writers have deliberately oor otherwise mentioned that Muslims were I Soth India even in 3rd century and so on!
S. M. Kamal, ***Muslimgalum, Tamilagamum*** (Tamil), Islamiya Ayvu Panpattu Maiyyam, Madras, 1990, p.22.
[2] U. N. Ghoshal, ***Studies in History and culture***, Orient Longmn, 1965, p.173.

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What is Arabia and who are Arabians? – this is very crucial to understand the entire question of the issue under stydy. Arabia known as "***Jezirat-al-Arab***" to its inhabitants and "***Arabistan***" to Persians and Turks[3]. "***Jezirat-al-Arab***" means "the island of Arabs", implying that Arabia might be an island once upon a time. Due to the prevalent of flood stories, generally, origin of ancient nations would be tracing their origin accordingly, thus, "the island of Arabs" might imply to such condition.

In 539 BCE, the Persians organized a Satrapy (a province with governor), which they called ***Arabaya***[4]. Incidentally Satrapy is derived from Persian ***khastra-pava***, a place meant for ***kshatriyas***, the rulers, a Sanskrit word. ***Arabia*** denotes a landmass of shape of square (***morabba*** = having four sides). Incidentally, in Arabic ***Makhbi*** means cube and the important place of worship is called ***Ka'ba***. It is also mentioned as ***Al-Arab***. ***A'rab*** means ***Badawia*** i.e, nomads. Thus, Arabs are ***Bedouins*** and they are nomads. In Hebrew, ***Ereb*** means desert. Etymologically, Arab is a Semite word meaning desert or the inhabitant thereof with no reference to nationality[5].

In Arabic, ***Arabi*** (singular masculine), ***Arabiyah*** (singular feminine), and ***Arab*** (plural) are used to denote the people of Arabia. Interestingly, the Arabic lexicons[6] give the following meanings to the word "***Arab***":

1. One whose tongue or speech was, or became Arabic or chaste Arabic.
2. Anyone became disordered in stomach by indigestion.
3. One who became corrupt or confused.
4. One who assimilated himself to the Arabs.

The contradicting meanings attributed are interesting because, even in Indian languages, "Arabs" are mentioned accordingly, which is discussed later in the context.

Another meaning implied for the Arabic word ***'arab*** (plural) is "those who speak clearly" as contrasted with ***'ajam***, whose speech is indistinct" (i.e, blurred, vague, not clear, unintelligible to others). Arabs used the expression ***ajam*** to denote Persians. Interestingly, in Sanskrit "***rav***" means noise and "***arav***" means noiseless. It is well known fact that civilized nations / people always dubbed other civilizations / people as uncivilized, barbarian, heathens, infidels, vandals, kafirs, mlechas and so on, mainly using the opposite word denoting such people. Thus, "***rav***" might be changed to "***rab***" later to be used as ***al-rab*** or ***al-arab*** by the Arabs. This is consistent with the name ***Aravasthan*** or ***Arabistan***. As the country was supposedly famous for ***aswas*** (horses), it might have bee called and known as ***Araswasthan*** or ***Arabistan*** or ***Aravastan***. This

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[3] Henri Stierlin, ***Great Civilizations: The Cultural History of the Arabs***, Italy, 1981, p.10.
This book contains excellent colour photographs of pre-Islamic and pre-Mohammedan monuments depicting the culture, tradition and heritage of the people who made them.

[4] M. TH. Houtsma, T. W. Arnold, R. Basset and Hartmann (Ed.), ***E. J. Brill's First Encyclopedia of Islam 1913-1936***, Netherlands, 1987, Vol.I, p.367.

[5] Philiup K. Hitti, ***History of Arabs***, Macmillan, 1985, Hong Kong, p.41.

[6] Edward William Lane, ***An Arabic-English Lexicon***, Asian educational Society, New Delhi, 1985, Part.5, p.1991.

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leads to plausible explanation to ***ravuttan***, as it might be derived from ***Arabistan*** – ***Aravastan*** – ***Aravattan*** – ***Ravuttan*** (a person who is well versed with horses, horse riding, training etc). As ***mavuttan*** (mahout) is used to elephant rider / trainer, ***ravuttan*** is used for horse rider / trainer and it is common word in Indian languages.

Though, all inhabitants are loosely mentioned as "Arabs" by others, the Arab historians distinguish three people groups among them[7].

1. ***Al-arab-al-baida*** = Lost Arabs, extinct Arabs of pre-historic times, Original Arabs;
2. ***Al-arab al-ariba*** = True arabs; Arabs proper, or the inhabitants of South Arabia, who are said to be the descendants of Kahtan (the Biblical Joktan);
3. ***Al-arab al-muta 'arriba*** = those incorporated in the Arabs or al-musta 'riba = those seeking to be Arabs. In short, both ae Arabized Arabs o. Mostarabs or Ishmaelites (descendants of Ismael), who entered the country from the north and became amalgamated gradually with the natives.

The very name Arabistan connotes the Sanskrit origin to the name as mentioned above. The Arabistan or Aravastan or Aravanadu is mentioned in the puranas and tamil literature. Itihasas and Puranas group them always under the category of "degraded and excommunicated khastriyas". H. P. Blavatsky[8] points out that according to ancient history writers, the Semites, especially the Arabs, were later Aryans – degenerated in spiritually and perfected materially. To these belong all the Jews and the Arabs. The former are a tribe descended from the Chandalas of India, the outcasts, many of them ex-Brahmins, who sought refuge in Chaldea, in Sinde (Sind) and Aria (Iran), and were truly born from their father A-Bram (No-Brahman). Some 8000 years BCE. Col. F. Wilford equates Aravastan with Arabia[9].

Rigveda mentions that Aswa and Arva denote Sun (X.132.5). thus, Arabia is the land of Sun or fire or snakes or horse. Related legends and facts show the connection of Arabia with these factors. In Egyptian and pre-Islamic mythology, Ibis was credited with fighting and exterminating the winged serpents which came even spring from Arabia and infested Egypt[10]. In the Sepher Yetzireh, the Kabalistic Book of Creation, the mystic Four is mentioned as Arab-al. It is from "Arba" that "Abram" is derived[11].

Ancient Indian literature makes references about Arabs and Arabia. According to Puranas, Arabia was one of the seven continents. Though, scholars differ in identification, it was a country located at or near equator. S. Muzafar Ali (1966: 40-41) identified with Kusa dwipa and Maya Prasad Tripathi (1969: 45) with Salmala dwipa. Kusa was the son of Rama married to a daughter of Nagas, whose country was Kusa

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7 The Hamsworth Encyclopedia, U.K., Vol.I, 1910 (?),p.305.
Encyclopedia Brittaanicana, Vol.2, 1981, USA, p. 163A.
Collier's Encyclopedia, Vol.2, 1981, USA, p.385.
8 H. P. Blsvatsky, ***The Secret Doctrine***, theosophical society, Madras, Vol.II, 1971, p.77.
9 Col. Wiford, ***Asiatik Researches***, Vol. III, p.326.
10 H. P. Blsvatsky, ***The Secret Doctrine***, theosophical society, Madras, Vol.II, 1971, p.205.
11 H. P. Blavatsky, Ibid, vol,II, p.51.

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dwipa. As the presiding deity was Agni, Fire-God, it points to Iran, the land of fire worshippers.

Arab and Cartographers: Arabia was depicted as the mirror of India (with left to right change, of course) by Hectaeus, the so-called "Father of Geography", in his map. According to Herodotus, "The Father of history", Arabia was smaller than India, but joined together. In both maps, Indus flows in the middle of India. Strabo projects Iran equated to India, with Indus dividing Iran and India, both appearing as square land mass. Arabian Felix is attached to Ariana (Iran). Ptolemy's Arabian Felix appears somewhat similar to present Arabia, but India has been distorted completely. The classical writers divided the land into three parts – Arabia Felix, Arabia Petraea (rocky area) and Arabia Deserta (deset area). The desert area in turn is divided into three[12].

i. al-nufud (the classical term used is al-badiyah or al-dahna; nufud = send desert) with white or red sand.
ii. Al-dahna (the red land) and al-harrah (a surface of corrugated and fissured lavas overlaying sandstone)
iii. Al-rab al-khali (no man's land) denotes to the southern part.

Scholars have pointed out the close trade connections between India and the ancient Middle East. One of the wives of Mohammed is Hind Umm-Salma and the name of wife of Abu Sufian is Hind denoting that they were from India or born of Indians, and probably Hindus. It is quite interesting to note that how they could have Indian wives immediately in Arabia under the divine circumstances explained by the theologians. Therefore, they must have lived in Arabia itself during the material period. Hence it is evident that in earlier time, there was some cultural connection between India and Arabia specifically.

Indians in Pre-Islamic Arabia: According to the Syrian writer Zenob[13], there was an Indian colony in the canton of Taron on the upper Euphrates, to the west of Lake van, as early as the second century BCE. The Indians built two temples containing images of gods about 16 and 22 feet high[14]. According to Muslim writers themselves, the Indians were going to Arabian pre-Islamic periods and some of them permanently settling there. Arab historians record some of them as Zut, Meid, Siyabajab, Ahamira and Aswirah. W. H. Siddhiqi[15] has elaborately dealt with the subject and explained each name. here, as the term Aswirah is important, its discussion is quoted. Indians were employed in and or as armies, in charge of treasury, ship crew, jail wardens and cooks, because they were "strong and brave", "dependable protectors", "the red-clad people from Sind" and so on, as has been described by the Arab poets. The term aswirah was derived from the

[12] Philiup K. Hitti, ***opto.cit***, Macmillan, pp.15-16.
[13] Journal of royal Asiatic society, 1904, p.309.
[14] R. C. Majumdar, ***The Age of Imperial Unity***, Bharatiya Vidya Bhawan, Bombay, p.633.
[15] W. H. Siddiqi, ***India's Contribution to Arab World***, in **India's Contribution to World thought and Culture**, Vivekananda Kendra Publication, Madras, 1970, pp.577-588.

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Sanskrit asvavara and meant a cavalryman[16]. Indian swords were admired like anything and mentioned as Saiuf al-Hind, Hindi, Muhaanniud, Hindani, Handawani. The names of Indian goods used were Arabicized and mentioned as kafur (karpur), zenjbeel (zenjbeer), fulfill (pippal), saj (sagwan), qust (kusta), dazi (tari), and qaranful (karnaphool). That South Indian names were also used there is well recorded to be repeated here (tuki = togai etc). These facts prove that Indians have been sea-farers in those times linking the ancient civilizations.

Arabs and horses: In the context of Tamilnadu, much fuss is made about horses connected with Arabs. The Pattuinapalai reference is attributed to Arab traders, though there is no mention about Arabs in it or even in the later Tamil literature. Kambar notes about "horses brought by turukkar" (Ramavataram, Balakandam, Varaikatchi padalam.908) and not by Arabs. The Sangam literature profusely mentions about horses, character of horses, horse raiding, cavalry, chariots etc. therefore, the presence of horses cannot be denied or doubted during the material period. The horse trading of the Arabs, as depicted and narrated by scholars and others related to the activities of 15th-16th centuries and they have no bearing on the earlier period.

Recent archaeological evidences[17] clearly prove that horse came from Central Asia and spread to other countries of the ancient world. The use of horse spread considerably in south central Asia, Afghanistan and eastern Central Asia only after 2000 BCE. Quoting Richard Meadow, Asko Parpola[18] concludes that there is no clear osteological evidence of the presence of horse in the Indian subcontinent until 2000 BCE. However, the skeletal remains of several domesticated horses (Equus Caballus Linn) spread over a very long period of time, from 2300 BCE to 1700 BCE at Surkotada. Similar evidences were reported from Harappa, ropal and Lothal. Mackay identified one terracotta figurine from Mohajodaro as representation of the horse and opined that the Indus valley people knew it about 2500 BCE., later confirmed by Bholanath, A. K. Sharma and V. V. Rao[19]. According to Prof Sandor Bokony, a leading scholar in the field of horses in asia and Europe pointed out that no horses lived in India in post-Pleistocene time ……as these horses were obviously imported from horse domestication centres recently discovered in Soviet Central Asia whose distance was essentially shorter from India than those of Ukraine[20]. Bihbetka rock paintings datable to 20,000-10,000 YBP depict horses in riding and hunting scenes[21]. The rock paintings datable to 2300 BCE found at Kizhvasal,

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[16] A. H. H. Abidi, ***Indo-Arab Relations Cultural or Commercial***, Cultural Forum, New Delhi, 1966, Vol.VIII, No.III, April 1966, p.30.

[17] J. P. Mallory, ***In Search of Indo-Europeans***, thanmes Hudson, London, 1991, p.276, fn.27.
EIA, Vol.I, p.76.

[18] Asko Psarpola, ***The Coming of the Aryans into Iran and India and the Cultural and Ethnic Identity of Dasas***, International Journal of Dravidian Linguistics, Vol. XVII, No.2, p.143.

[19] S. P. Gupta, ***Palaeo-Anthropology and Archaeology of the Vedic Aryans***, BISS, Pune, 1993, pp.162-163.

[20] Prof. Sandor Bokonyi, who is the director of the Achaeological Institute of Budapest, Hungary, gives the details in his letter dated Dec.13, 1991 addressed to the Director General, Archaeological Survey of India, New Delhi.

[21] V. C. Wankakar, ***Bhimbetka – The Prehistoric Paradise***, Prachya Pratba, Vol. III, No.2.

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Settavarai, Alambadi (South arcot dist), Vettakkaaran malai (Coimbatore), Angananchimalai (Dharmapuri) too depict horses with soldiers riding[22].

Horse is denoted by many words in Sanskrit – ***aswa***, ***turaga***, ***turanga-gam***, sapti, vajit, vah, ***arvan***, gotka, viti, gandharva, sowndhava. Here, the italicized words are important for discussion, as they are used in the context of Arabs and horses.

Interestingly, the word ***arvan*** has the following meanings:

1. a horse.
2. one of the ten horses of the moon.
3. Indra.
4. a short span.
5. a mare (arvanati)
6. abawd, procures (arvanati)

Here, the italicized words / meanings are associated with Islamic literature / theology.

Arabian Language and Arabic: According to Reynold Nicholson[23], there are two principal dialects of Arabic:

1. South Arabic, spoken in Yemen and including Sabaean, Himyarite, Minaean, with kindred dialects of Mahra and Shihr.
2. Arabic proper, spoken in Arabia generally, exclusive of Yemen.

The history of Arabic is also coincided with the following three periods:

i. The Sabaean and Himyarite period, from 800 BCE, the date of the oldest South Arabic inscriptions, to 500 CE.
ii. The Pre-Islamic period (500-622 CE).
iii. The muhammadan period, beginning with Hijra or Hegira.

Generally, the pre-islamic period is also mentioned as Jahalliyya (the age of ignorance, darkness or barbarism) by the Muhammadan writers.

After 7th century it was popularized with the rise of Islam through Quaran. The Arabs had their distinctive culture, tradition, heritage and civilization, which they did not want to forget or replace with new or changed ones. Particularly, the tribal entity had been so predominant acting consciously in their minds. The Arabic poetry too some extent describes their reminiscences. Even after the advent of Islam, as the converted Arabs could not compromise with the idea of giving up their tribal habits or practices,

[22] The Tamilnadu State Archaeological department reports. As they have been found at Megalithic burial sites, they have been dated to c.2300 BCE.
[23] Reynold Nicholson, ***A Literary History of the Arabs***, Adam Publishers & Distributors, New Delhi, 1896, p.xxi.

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Mohammed had to accommodate many of their pre-Islamic practices and beliefs into Islam e., yearly pilgrimage, ka'ba, etc.[24]

Arabia before and after the advent of Islam: the history of Arabs or Arabia does not start with Islam, but goes back to 5th century BCE. Arabia before Mohammed and Islam is itself an interesting topic for study. With the rise of Islam, it is noted that many evidences of the past depicting the pre-Mohammed and pre-Islamic Arabia were either completely destroyed or amalgamated into Islam in such a way, it could not be identified as such. The books written were also destroyed[25]. In fact, Islamic tradition divides the world chronology into two – Jahallia and Islamic i.e, the world clouded over by darkness of ignorance and the world illuminated by Islam. Thus, Islam prohibited research into pre-Mohammedan and pre-Islamic history, as pointed out by the western scholars, who stumbled upon many archaeological findings. However, it is evident that pre-Mohammedan Arabia had good contacts with India since 1000 BCE.

Just like the pre-islamic and post-Islamic apocryphal stories were having many references about India Puranas too have details about Arabia. One Sankara Vijayam depicts Adi Sankara preaching to Arabs[26]. Of course, the sojourn of Guru Nanak to Mecca was an historical fact[27]. Old Encyclopedia merticulously recorded that the Meccan temple Kaba had 360 idols, which were destroyed by Mohammed[28]. When he tried to break Kaba, the Arabians prevented him to do so. Thus, it survived and continued to stand as the only evidence of pre-Mohammedan and pre-Islamic evidence of worship.

The Arab rulers and Muslim Rulers: the history of Arabia before the advent of Islam has been made obscure as almost all the pre-Islamic traces of evidences were wiped out, obliterated or destroyed completely. The Arab rulers were not so popular, as only Arab traders were sojourning different parts of the world. However, the Islamic rulers had the title "Caliph" and hence the rule "Caliphite". The Islam as such was started with Mohammed (570-632 CE) in the early 7th century CE. The Rashidin Caliphs' rule started with 632 CE and ended in 656 CE followed by the rule Ommeyyade sovereign of Damascus upto 745 CE. Then, simultaneously, the Abbaside Caliphs of Baghdad between 908 CE to 1160 CE and the Ommeyyade Caliph of Cordova in Spain between

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[24] Syed Amir Ali, ***The Spirit of Islam***, University Paperbacks, U. K. 1967, p.lxxi.

[25] James Hastings (Ed.), ***Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics***, T & T clark, Edinburgh, 1994, p.659. It is pointed out: "Much credit is due to a few of the early Muhammadan scholars, who laboriously collected and handed down to posterity in a systematic form, whatever it was possible to asecertain about the heathen mythology and ritual. Among the scholars a specially prominent place must be assigned to Hishm b.Muhammad al-Kalm, usually known as Isbn al-kalbi (819-820 A. D), the author of the "Book of Idold (Kitabal-asnam)", the substance of which is known to us in the form of quotations, through the work is no longer extant".

[26] K. V. Subburatnam, ***The Date of Sankara***, Vani Vilas Press, Srirangam, 1987, p24 referring to a book "Vimarsa" published in 1898.

[27] Surinder Singh Kohli, ***Guru Nanak's Travels in the Middle East***, in **India's Contribution to World thought and Culture**, Madras, 1970, pp.597-600.

[28] Interesting details about 360 idols and paintings found at Ka'ba, origin of Ka'ba etc., have been mentioned in many Encyclopedias.

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756 CE to 1031 CE. During the period, many scholars of India were invited to Arabia and many of Indian scientific works translated into Arabic with immediate implementation and application of such knowledge. Gthe Indian Siddhanta was mentioned as Sind-Hind. The Indian or Hindu numbers are called as "Sind Hind" or "Hind Sind". Muslim rulers are not Arabs. Muslim rulers include Arabs, Turks, Persians, Mongols, Ottomans and stock of Central Asia, India, Indonesia and Africa[29].

The first Arab settlers in south India: The Islamic writers claim that the first Arabs came to South India and settled there for trading even during the 1st or 2nd century based on Sangam literature equating Yavanr with Arabs, but such usage began only in the medieval period. It is suggested that the word Sonagar might have come from Yavanar, but both words have been mentioned separately in the Nigandus even up to 9th century, implying that they were separate people groups.

The spread of Islam during 632 CE had not penetrated among the Arab races settled in Syria and Mesopotamia, most of whom were Christians, he whole of Arabia now followed by the Islamic faith[30]. Thus, the land-route spread of Islam could have been possible only crossing the Mesopotamia (Iraq) to encounter Persian rulers. Then crossing Iran and Afghanistan-Sind provinces only, it couls have entered into India, as modern-day scholars perceive. That is why, they have taken 712 CE as the date of "Arab invasion of Sind".

There have been the claims of Muslim writers that the first Muslim fleet appeared to Thanas near Bombay in 636 CE during the Caliphite of Umar, only four year after the death of Prophet Mohammed. In the early part of 8th century, Hajjaj bin Yusuf drove some persons of the house of Hasham, and they left their homeland to settle in Konkan and Cape Comorin area. However, it is interesting to note that Sulaiman, who visitedindia in the 9th century states that he did not find any Muslims or Arabic speaking people on the west coast[31]. Lanepoole also records that in 1000 CE, there were no Muslims in northern India east of the Indus[32].

Though, people belonging to Turkish, Persian, Arab, Afghan, Mongol, Abyssinian and Egyptian origin were generally mentioned either as "Turk" or "Arabs". As most of Bahman Shah' nobles and members of army were foreigners, two groups were identified during his rule and they were Afaqis and Deccanis[33]. Sultan ahmed had a special corps of archers from Iraq, Khurasan Tansoxiana, Turkey and Arabia[34]. In the Malabar Coast, the locals were called Moplahs. Thus, the local Muslims were always differentiated by the Muslim chroniclers from ythe foreign or origin ones. Tarikh-I-Firoz

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[29] K. S. Lal, ***Indian Muslims: Who Are They***, Voice of India, New Delhi, 1980.
[30] Syed Ameer Ali, ***The Spirit of Islam***, University Paperbacks, Methurn, London, 1967, p115.
[31] Sulaiman Saudagar, Hindi translation of his Narrative by Mahesh Prasad, (Kashi, Sam, 1978, C. E. 1921), p.24.
[32] Stanely Lane-Pole, ***Medieval India under Muhammadan rule***, London, 1926, p.1 and Elliot an Dawson, Eliot's Appendix, E, D and I, p.459.
[33] H. K. Sherwani, ***Muhamud Gawan***, Allahabad, 1942, pp.61-71, especially p.63 and fn.50.
[34] Cambridge History of India, Vol. III, p.432.

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Shahi and Fatwa-I-Jahandari always credit foreign Muslims with all possible virtues, while local converted Muslims with all kinds of vices[35].

The references about Arabs in the Tamil literature: In the ancient Tamil literature popularly known as "Sangam literature" (datable to c.300 BCE to 300 CE or 500 CE period), there is no mention about Arabs and its other forms Arabiar or Turukkar. Such expressions are not found even in the "Nigantus", the thesauruses / encyclopedia like works. The word Mlecha appears in Mullaippaatu referring to people speaking some unknown language.

The words mlechar (மிலேச்சர்) and milaichar (மிலைச்சர்) appearing in Sendan Divakaram (6th cent.CE), Pingalandai (8th or 9th cent.CE) and Chudamani Nigandu (10th cent) refer to Ariyar (ஆரியர்). The word Sonagar (சோனகர்) is grouped with foreigners succeeded by Yavanar (யவனர்) generally denoted to Greeks or Romans. The word "Thurukkar" appears in Kamba Ramayanam (844 CE), Tiruvilaiyadal puranam and Kalingattupparani[36]. Therefore, it is evident that upto 14th century, there was no mention of Arab groups in the Tamil literature. Though the expression "Tulukka Nachiyar" (துலுக்க நாச்சியார்) is attributed to a Muslim lady who wanted to marry Lord Vishnu just like Andal, its reference first appears only in 18th century literature. The entire legend appears to be floated by some writer or people who wanted to maintain good relationship between Hindus and Muslims, evidently after mounting tension between them. Hence the words and expressions tulukkar, turukkar, Ravuttar, Mugamathiyar etc., are definitely of later origin.

Conversion of Hindus to Islam and rise of Islamic faith: In spite of the claim of Islamic writers and other sources, the reality of increase of Muslims as such in South India could have been possible only due to conversion. The Muslim writers invariably claim that the Arabs came to south India in the sixth century itself and they were Muslims. They married local Hindu women and raised their families. However, no reason has been given as to how and why the local Hindu women should have been married to them. Unless, alien people settled and accustomed to the locals for a long

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35 Tarikh-I-Firoz Shahi and Fatwa-I-Jahandari

36 பிடக்கர் குருக்கர் துருக்கர் - Pidakkar krukkar turukkar – Kalingattupparani. 333;

துருக்கர் தரவந்த வயப்பரிகள் - Turukkar taravantha vayapparigal – Kamba Ramayanam (14:13:902).

மாமயில் ஏறும் ராவுத்தனே - Mamayil erum ravuttane – கந்தன் அலங்காரம் - Kandan Alangaram (denoting Murugan).

சூர் கொன்ற ராவுத்தனே - Sur konra ravuttane – Kandar Kali Venba - கந்தர் கலி வெண்பா (denoting to Murugan).

கோட்டமிலா மாணிக்கவாசகர் முன் குதிரை ராவுத்தனாக வந்துKottam illa Manikkavacakarmun kuthirai ravuttanai – Tiruppendurai puranam - திருப்பெருந்துறை புராணம் (Siva).

Tuyya perulagukkellam tulsngiya ravuttanai – Tiruvalavayudaiyar , Tiruvilaiyadal puranam.

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time, such type of marital alliances could not have taken place. Of course, during Moghul rule also, many instances have been found that Muslim rulers were going on marrying Rajaput women, invariably after their defeat. Even in the friendly alliance also, only Muslim Rulers married Hindu Rajaput women and no Muslim woman was married to any Rajaput. Thus, in the claimed sixth century, it cannot be expected that the Hindus would have simply given away their women to the Arabs or Muslims for marriage. Therefore, the issue has to be studied critically, as reliance has to be placed on one particular source and no other historical documents are there to cross check such claims. During the material period 4th to 9th centuries CE, the South India, particularly, Tamizhagam was filled with the Bakti movement with the Azhwars and Nayanmars visiting many places throughout India. As they were moving all places in the south covering different places, their songs had also been evidently popular attracting people. The Vaishavaite ad Saivite literature prove such fact.

Ironically fourth to seventh centuries period is mentioned as “dark period” as nothing is known. This is also called as “Kalabhra period / interregnum” by some scholars, as Kalabrars, the Jains were ruling and they were against Tamil culture and they even resorted to destroy Tamil culture, literature etc. However, during fourth century, a Jain monk Nagananti was reportedly started a “Tamil Sangam” and preserved the Tamil literature. Of course, the Jaina influence on the Tamil literature has been indelible. Thus, the interpretation of scholars about Kalabras has been confusing.

Thus, under such circumstances, the Muslims could have married to Hindu women to raise their population appears to be not sustainable. The Tamil literature never mention about Muslims as pointed out above till seventh century, when Kambar made a reference about “thurukkar”. However, as explained, those “thurukkar” cannot be said to be “Muslims”. Thus, only from 14th century onwards, there have been clear evidences that Muslims were there in Tamilnadu.

Pathan / pattanikkaaran: The words Pathan or Pattaniyasn or Pattaniyakkaran refer to people from Afghanistan and Ittikkaran from iran who used to lend money on hefty interests. It is interesting to note that Islam reportedly advocates against charging interest on lending money. Therefore, it is doubtful as to whether these group of people mentioned in 18th-19th centuries were Muslims or otherwise.

Maraikaayar / Marakkala nayagan: Marakkayar. It is also of recent origin as per the analysis of the origin of the word. It is said that these people were persecuted in their country and driven out. As they landed in Tamizhagam in their “***Markabs***” meaning boats, they were called as Marakkayars. But, there had been people called as “***Marakkala nayagan***” i.e, person in-charge of boat / vessel made of wood. Thus, the boat could be of any dimension and thus, the In-charge could be construed accordingly.

Sonagan / Jonagan: Jonagans are supposed to have separated from Marakkaayars because of their Hindu parentage. The term Jonagan or Sonagan, meaning a native of

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Sonagam lor Arabia, is applied by Hindus both to Labbais and Marakkayars, but it is usually held to have contemptuous flavour about it[37].

Labbai: As regards the origin, Col. Wilks[38], the historian of Mysore, writes as follows: "*About the end of the first century of the Hijrah, or the early part of the eighth century A. D, Hijaj Ben Gussaff, governor of Irak, a monster abhorred for his cruelties even among Musslmans, drove some persons of the house of Hasham to the desperate resolution of abandoning for ever their native country. Some of them landed on that part of the western coast of India called the Concan, the others to the eastward of Cape Comorin. The descendents of the former are Navaiyats, of the latter the Labbai, a name probably given to them by the natives from that Arabic partickle (a modification of labbick) corresponding with English "Here I am" indicating the attention of being spoken to [i.e, the response of the servant to the call of master]. A further explanation of the name is that the Labbais were originally few in number, and were often oppressed by other Muhanmmadans and Hindus, to whom they cried labbek, or we are servants. Another account says they are the desendents of the arabs, who in the eleventh and twelth centuries, came to India for trade. These Arabs were persecuted by the Mughals, and they then returned to their country, leaving behind their children born of Indian women. The word labbai seems to be of recent origin for, in tamil lexicons, this caste is usually known as Sonagan i.e, a native of Sonagam (Arabia), and this remains common at the present day. Most of the labbais are traders; some are engaged in weaving corah (sedge) mats; and others in diving at the pearl and chank fisheries of the Gulf Mannar. Tamil is their home-speech, and they have furnished some fair Tamil poets. In religion they are orthodox Musalmans……..Their titles are Marakkayan (Marakkalar, boatman), and Ravuttan (a horse trader)*".

Incidentally, in Arabic, "Lebbaika Allah Umma" means "O God, we have come". Therefore, Lebbaik may be understood as "He I am" or "We are servants of you". In Quran, the expression "Lebbbaik lebbaik Allah Umma lebbaik" appears and its meaning is "O God, we have come here (in search of you)".

Therefore, it is evident that the British government writers too have relied upon the oral traditions mentioned about the different people groups. Thus, they attribute to, their arrival in India either in 8th or 11th and 12th centuries.

There is an interesting discussion about the word "Aravam", "aravam vadu", "Aravavadu" etc. The Tamilians call Telugu speaking people as "Gulute" or "Golti" just reversing the letters of word "Telugu". Therefore, the Telugus call them in turn "Aravam vadu" or "Arava vadu", as the people of Aravanadu or Aravastan or Arabistan do in reverse everything that is done by Indians. But all these musings are of recent origin.

[37] Edgar Thruston, ***Castes and Tribes of Southern India***, Madras, 1909, Vol.V, p.4.
[38] Edgar Thruston, opt.cit, Vol.V, p.200.

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The mention of Arabs in inscriptions: The words "Turuka", "Turuka', "Turushkas", "Turukkiyar" are appearing in the inscriptions dated from 12th century onwards. These words were used to denote the Mohammedans people and community, and as well as armies. Kabul inscription[39] of 7th century notes that Lalliya's kingdom as lying between the lands of the Darads[40] (i.e, Dardistan) and Turushkas (Turks – Rajatarangini. V.155). Gahadavala grant mentions about turuskhadanda a tax to meet the expenses of defence against the Turkish musalmans or a levy from Musalman subjects or traders[41]. Turushkas denoting Muhammadan invaders were subjugated by Lalhsmanadeva (Nagpur stone inscription[42] of the rulers of Malva of 12th cen.CE), Mokala of Mewad subdued Turushkas (Chitorgarh stone inscription[43]) of 1439 CE. The Maratha Copper plates[44] give interesting details about the words ravuttan, sayaibu, padusha, as they are used to denote Maratha rulers and other feudatories of Tamilnadu during 17th-19th centuries of Pratap Singh (1739-63). Therefore, the word 'ravuttan" does not have any exclusive usage to denote Arabs or tuluka or turukkars, but to denote any person connected with horses, horse riding, cavalry etc. This is amply borne out by the literary evidences as mentioned above.

Myth and reality of Ravuththar, Rowthar etc: how the expression "karthar" now synonymously used with the Christian God has indeed denotes "Shiva", ironically, the expression Ravuthar / ravuthan denotes to Muruga, the Tamil God! In fact, Arunagirinathar invokes Muuga with that name many times, particularly, the expression "***kuthirai eerum ravaththanee***" (குடிரையேறும் ராவுத்தனே) is significant but intriguing. The expression means "the Ravuthan who rides a horse", but, never in the literature of Muruga, he is depicted as riding a horse! In fact, Paripadal itself gives the details that he rode an elephant and a ram. Therefore, that the Tamil Muslims with Turkish ancestry are called 'Ravuthars / Rowthers' in Thamizhagam is only latter-day invention. The possible derivation could be Arabastan - Aravasthaanan – aravathaanan – aravaththaan – ravuththan (அரபஸ்தான் - அரவஸ்தானன் – அரவத்தானன் – அராவுத்தன் – ராவுத்தன்), as Arab was considered as the land of horses or horses were imported through the Arabs.

Thulukkar / thulukkan: Throughout India, the Mohammedans were generally mentioned as thurakka, thurakshas, thrukka, thulukka and other forms in all Indian languages. Therefore the opinion or consideration that the word is derogatory is meaningless. That nowadays, it is not used only proves the guilty consciousness of the concerned.

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39 Epigraphica indica, Vol.XXXV, p.p.45-46.
40 D. C. Sircar, ***Studies in the Geography of Ancient and Medieval India***, p.235.
41 E.I, Vol.XXXV, p.208.
42 EI, Vol.II, Motilal Banarasidas, New Delhi, 1970, p.181.
43 Ibid, p.490n
44 S. Rau, ***Thanjai Marattiya Seppeedugal*** (The Copper plates of Tanjore Maratha Rulers), Tamil University, Tanjore, 1993.

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Arabs versus Muslims: the whole confusion may get dissolved, if one analyses the difference between the concept and evolution of Arabs and Muslims. Arabs, were / have been claiming superiority with or without Islam i.e, before and after the advent of Islam in Arabia. Even during the reign of Umar the difference between Arab Muslim and non-Arab Muslim was working consciously. The ladder is always – Arab Muslim, non-Arab Muslim, Arab non-believer, Arab believer, non-Arab non-believer and so on. The Arabs were allowed to hold landed property in the newly conquered territories. Arabs also want to rule over Muslims and Islam, by way of controlling Ka'ba, haj and other connected entities. Thus, non-Arab Muslims are treated indifferently at Saudi Arabia and also durinmg Haj pilgrimage. The concept called Arabism urged them Umar's military constitution set up an ascendancy of Arabism and secured for the non-Arabian believer a status superior to that of the unbeliever. In modern times, Arabism is equated with Pan-Islamism[45].

Arab superiority: The Arabism has roots in Arab superiority tracing back to pre-Islamic period. The Arabs always considered them as superior and even exclusive tribe. Even after the advent of Islam, they considered Arab Muslims were superior to other Muslims and treated accordingly. This attitude is well brought out in the concept of Mavvia. The word Mavvia is derived from wala connoting to be close to, to be friends with, have power over. The mawia in pre-Islamic Arabia were an Arabic tribe treated inferior by the Arabs. Renold Nicholson points out that after conquering Syria and Persia, the Arabs regarded the native population as inferior race. They thought that they would be treated at par on conversion to the religion of the Arabs, but they were considered as only mawalli meaning clients without obtaining equal rights. They were subjected to every kind of social degradation and the government officials exacted taxes from them[46]. This attitude is revealed In treating other Muslims as dimmis and non-Muslims kafirs.

The first conquest of Southern India by Muslim rulers: According to historians, the first Mohammedan invasion of Deccan or South India took place during the reign of Aladdun Khilji (1290-1376) under the command of Malikkafur in 1294. He marched upto Rameswaram, looted many temples, and returned to Delhi with the booty. Several inscriptions have recorded this event. The Muslim political dominance did not stop with the fall of Madurai sulthans, but continued with the representatives of Mughals, who were later conferred with the title "Arcot Nawabs", with the support of the British[47].

The claim of orthodox and pious historians or Muslim chroniclers:It is general tendency of every Islamic scholar to trace the origin of popular Islamic figure or character to Arabia, particularly, Mohammed or his family members for creating religious fervour, theological force and divine appeal. They also claim that islam was there in South India at the very beginning of first Hijira (the first Islamic year).

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[45] Rafiq zackaria, ***The struggle within Islam***, Viking, p.177.
[46] Raymond Nicholson, opt.cit, p.219, 247, 278, 279.
[47] S. Krishnaswami Aiyangar, ***The South India and Mohammedan Invaders***, S. Chand & Co., New Delhi, 1921.

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They also claim that Islam might or could have come into South India during the 7th century itself much before its advent in north India. That is Islam was there in the South before the sind invasion in 712 CE. From Yemen a ship with Muslims came to eylon in 642 CE / 22 HE. Another group of Muslims c ame to Kayalpattinam in 846 CE / 232 HE and in Kizhakkarai in 1182 CE / 578 HE and so on.

Stories connected with Islamic saints etc: The Church historians and propagandists have been making claims that one St Thomas and even Jesus came to India, preached and martyred here. It is evident that Muslims also resorted to such methodology. Just like Thomas myth floaters, som Muslim writers have spun and circulated stories connected with Islamic saints, just to claim that they had origins with Prophet or Prophet family. They claim the close friends of Prophet Mohammed Tamim-ul-Unsari and Mohammed Ukkasa have been entombed at Muhammad Bandar, parangipettai and Sahid Bandar, Kovalam. They also claim that one Karim came from Iraq (note not from Arabia) and was entombed at Kottaru, Kanyakumari District with Hijira 5 (624 CE) inscribed and another Abdul Rahman at kotharisa hill, Nellai district with Hijira 8 (628 CE). But, none established the archaeological or historical authenticity, except quoting from one Islamic encyclopedia.

It is pointed out that the legends and myths floated around these claims and that of St Thomas are found to be working on similar lines[48] (the great fuss made about Cheraman Perumal, tombs / dargahs found at different places, miracles performed, etc.). In fact, same personalities and places are identified and exalted for their martyrdom etc. they tried to connect historical personalities and events to appear as authentic though such hagiographic writings.

Thus we see such claims are made by Islamic counterparts so that Adi sankara (509-477 BCE or 788-820 CE) was alleged to have been influenced by Sufism or Islam to propound Advaita, Manickavasakar (dated to 5th to 9th centuries by various authors) to invent a new God and connected philosophy in 9th century and so on. Another story was how Ramanuja (c.1017-1137) was attracted towards the conversion activities of one Table alam Badusha Nattar in trichy in 11th century and started preaching equality and donning sacred thread to everybody.

The modus operandi is like this . First, one writer mentions one event based on some unknown, unverifiable or inaccessible document. That document would be turned out to be a forgery or latter dated on verification later. But, meanwhile, several writers would carry the story quoting former writers as authorities. Thus, the quoted quotes would be presented as established proven historical facts. They multiply and spread scrupulously with due support from other scholars, professors, theologians and so on. Without taking

[48] T. K. Joseph, ***Six St thomases of south India***, Chengannur, Kerala, 1955.
Vedaprakash, ***Indiayavil Saint Thomas kattukkathai***, Institute for the Study of western religions, Madras, 1989.
Ishwar Sharan, ***The Myth of Saint Thomas and the Mylapore Shiva Temple***, Voice of India, New Delhi, 1995.

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cognizance of the spurious research, quoted quote methodology and secondary-secondary source techniques, they graciously release the books, review them and give much publicity.

Therefore, in historiography, unverifiable quoted quote methodology should be avoided. The technology of historicizing the hagiographical and theological legends , myths and apocryphas should be dispensed with, without any second thought.

Conclusion: From the foregoing discussion based on many historical evidences in the context, the following points are drawn as conclusion:

1. There is no question of Muslims / Mohammedans coming to South India before the advent of Islam in the Arabian Peninsula.

2. Different peoples of Rabs might have had trade contacts with South India before and after the advent of Islam, but all were not Mohammedans / Muslims.

3. All such peoples, though loosely mentioned as “Turks” or “Arabs” by the court chroniclers, Islamic writers and Indian authors, they belonged to different tribes of Middle-east including Arabia.

4. “Arabism” or Arab identity mde them to mention all of them as “Arabs,” because of the culture, tradition, mannerism etc, followed or compelled to be followed by them.

5. Local converted Muslims were always differentiated from the stock of the Middle-east or Arabia and thus, the cannot be considered as “Arabs.”

6. “Yavanas” as mentioned in the Sangam literature cannot be equated with the “Arabs,” as they specifically denoted to the Greeks or particularly Romans.

7. Though, the presence of “Arabs” as traders and Muslims were there in the South India, their influence exerted in the North India, as could be noted in the different aspects of religion, culture, heritage and civilization of Indians.

8. The question of horse also point to Central Asia and not Arabia based on the archaeological evidences. Of course, medieval period onwards, the Arab connection with the horse import cannot be denied.

9. As for as the South India was concerned, the impact of Mohammedan intrusion from the North India was well recorded, noted and experienced.

10. Inscriptional evidences prove that the expressions turk, turukkar, turuksha, tulukka etc., were used only after 10th-11th centuries.

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